

Thursday February 1 1996

Table of international exchange rates for various countries including Albania, Austria, Belgium, etc.

The Guardian INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

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46 464

Henry Porter on the triumph of trivia

Decline of the intellectual

G2 with European weather



OnLine

France edges towards the 'pernicious' Net

G2 pages 10/13

Screen

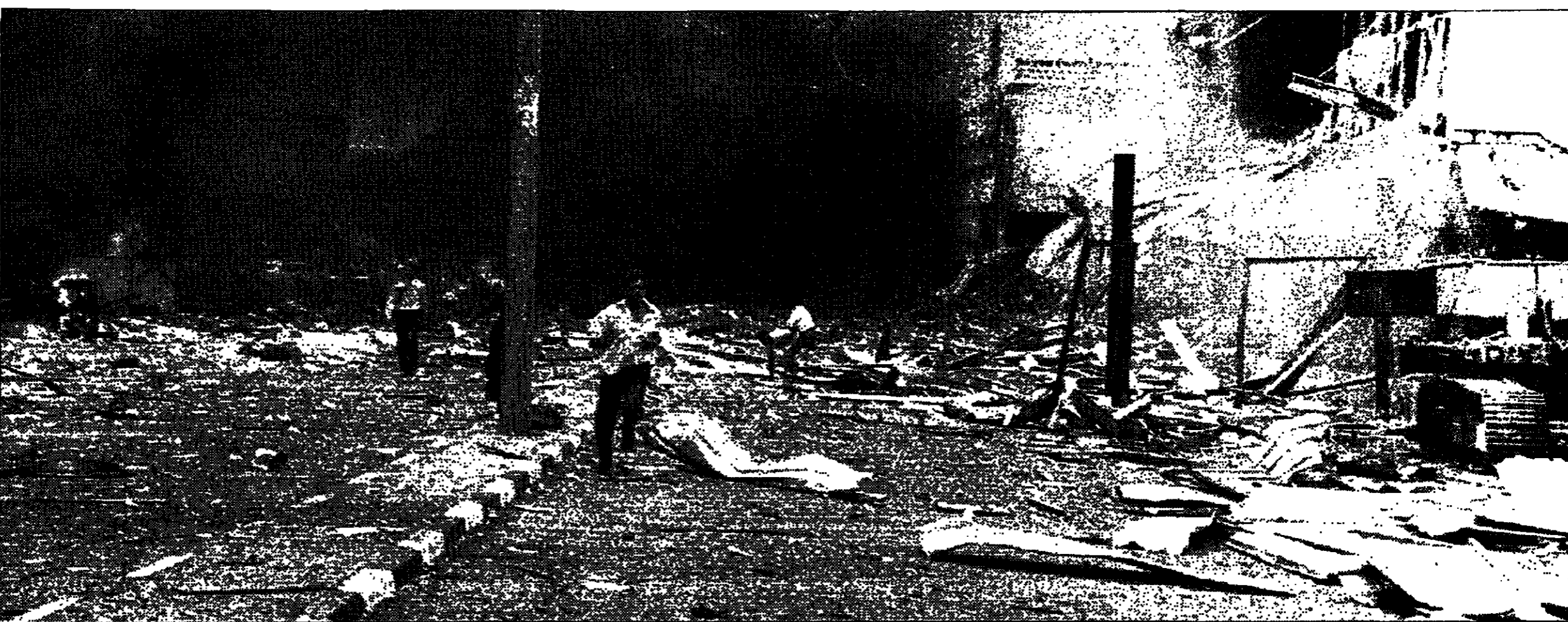
The triumphant return of Jean-Paul Belmondo

G2 page 8



Tamil separatists blamed for devastating retaliation against army gains

Tiger massacre in Colombo



Dazed workers flee the scene of yesterday's devastating bomb attack in one of the most heavily guarded districts of Colombo

PHOTOGRAPH ANURUDHRA LONDHPAPARACHCHI

Suzanne Goldenberg, and Mohan Samarasinghe of Reuters in Colombo

SRI LANKA paid in blood yesterday for its victories over the Tamil Tiger guerrillas...

"It has to be [the Tamil Tigers]," Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe, the military's spokesman, said. "Who else would have done a thing like this?"

Colombo bomb A lorry packed with explosives blew up in front of the Central Bank in Colombo at 10.45am local time (05.15 GMT) yesterday. It killed some 55 people and wounded over 1,000.

down, lifts plummeted to the ground and gaping holes were punched in walls. The wounded clung for support to walls and railings, which quickly became red with blood.

fears for the safety of the Australian cricket team, who are due to play Sri Lanka in Colombo in their opening World Cup match on February 17. They are considering forfeiting the game. Their coach Bobby Simpson asked: "Who wants to be around when bombs are going off?"

underscores her vulnerability. The suicide bomb is certain to affect the government's efforts to win support from the majority Sinhalese community for peace proposals aimed at ending the war.

It is already clear that the Sri Lankan authorities can no longer protect the country's capital, even while the military has been mopping up the remaining pockets under Tiger control in the east.

Two weeks ago, the government put its peace pact to a referendum. Turn to page 2, column 7

MPs under fire for pay claim

THE latest backbench campaign to raise MPs' pay backfired last night amid furious denunciations of political insensitivity from poverty lobbyists and disaffected voters...

Share payout for millions after building society joins the bank wagon

MORE THAN 3/4 million people are expected to get an average of £1,000 each after the Alliance & Leicester building society announced its stock market flotation yesterday.

Further cut in base rate looks likely in wake of US move

over base rates, the move by the US Federal Reserve was being seen by dealers as the trigger for reductions elsewhere in the world.

Advertisement for baby boxes: Send a baby box to Bosnia this winter. Includes image of a baby and text about supporting Bosnia.

Bottom section containing 'Inside', 'G2', 'Pass Notes', 'Quick Crossword', and a barcode with the number 9 770261 307347.

Sketch

Wine and cheese, whines and dosh



Simon Hoggart

THE great battles of history - Agincourt, Gettysburg, the Labour Party Conference - have always spawned smaller skirmishes on the side. Carthorses haul the rotting corpses from the main engagement, but years later a pile of bones is found in a spinney, or a ploughman's harrow unearths a mangled skull.

parties. How much wine and cheese did they have to stuff into fugitive-from-justice Asil Nadir? He gave them £400,000, and they were so careless with the papers that they could not provide the Official Receiver with the relevant facts and figures.

Labour drops all-women shortlists to safeguard chosen candidates



Pola Manzila Uddin... favourite for Bethnal Green and Bow now faces battle with male rivals

Patrick Wintour, Chief Political Correspondent

LABOUR yesterday jettisoned its policy of all-women shortlists after lawyers warned it could risk an appeal that might leave as many as 70 parliamentary selections in limbo right up to the general election.

John Evans and Dennis Skinner voted against the one-month delay, arguing the seats needed candidates as soon as possible. Clare Short, the former party women's spokeswoman, said she hoped all good party members would do everything possible to select women candidates.

Review

Calling the dog in for dinner

Caroline Sullivan

Melissa Etheridge Shepherds Bush Empire

working-class hero persona has been making careers since rock was invented: Bruce Springsteen built an empire on less. Etheridge, however, does not possess the magic that can make songs about Midwestern suburbs special.

Opportunity knocks again for party men as selection of candidate is thrown open in safe seats

Martin Linton

POLA Manzila Uddin still has high hopes of becoming the first Asian woman MP, but she will have to beat male rivals in new women-only shortlists.

ported with a general shortlist, whether it likes it or not," says Mrs Uddin. Leading male contenders are ready to throw their hats back in the ring.

Another nine mainly northern safe Labour seats expected to be freed from the requirement to have an all-women shortlist will attract a scramble among Labour hopefuls.

Labour has said it does not intend to re-run the selections in 35 seats that have picked candidates from all-women shortlists.

In a few seats all-women shortlists were imposed against vociferous opposition of local activists or former candidates.



Ecstasy death caused by water

Alex Beles

ECSTASY victim Leah Betts probably died from a combination of the drug and drinking too much water, an inquest was told yesterday.

Leah died in a coma six days after taking the drug at her home in Maldon, Essex. The coroner, Dr Malcolm Weir, recorded a verdict of accidental death caused by non-dependent use of drugs.

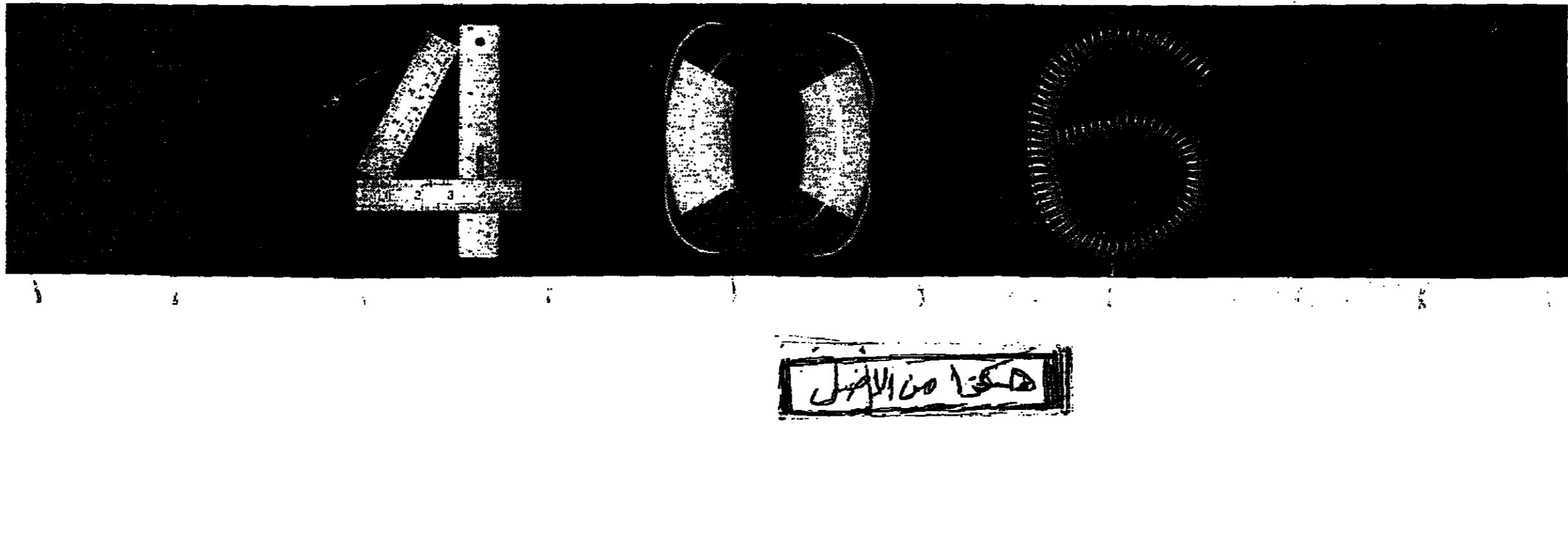
Leah's friend Sarah Gargill, in a statement read out in court, said she had taken ecstasy four times with Leah. They had also once bought a 55 bag of "speed", a powdered amphetamine, in Raquel's Nightclub in Basildon.

There was no sound; there was no movement. It was one of those things where you don't really believe it." He gave her resuscitation mouth to mouth until an ambulance arrived.

Tamil Tigers blamed for massive suicide bombing in Colombo

1,000 Buddhist monks in an effort to win their support for the plan, which would give regional councils power over land, police and investment.

She repeated her argument, by now familiar, that the crisis is political and ethnic in nature - and not merely terrorism that can be fought with military force.



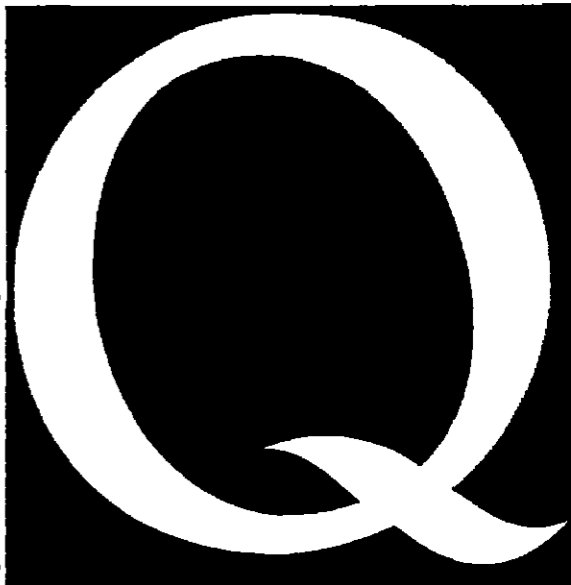
مكتبة العدل



The Rev Brian Brown, and a scene from one of the animated cartoons, The Story Keepers, which were his brainchild and have been a hit in the US

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New issue OUT NOW!



"I am rich. There's no point denying it."



This month in Q, Damon Albarn comes clean about life in Blur: the fraught relationships, the financial rewards and his plans for a Great Escape from the Beatles of Britpop.

PLUS! Crack, kids and firefighting with Coolio; The showbiz childhood and all-Canadian angst of Alanis Morissette; Neil Diamond on marriage, moolah and misery, and - cue theramin! - the definitive story of the Beach Boys' sun-soaked '60s heyday.

ALSO! We're with the Banned! Q's guide to the records you weren't supposed to hear. And what the hell does The National Lottery think it is?

AND! in the world's only climate-controlled Reviews section: Lou Reed, Thin Lizzy, Beaties, Ministry, Eazy-E, and Babylon Zoo.



Q Out now! ALL THE PEOPLE, SO MANY PEOPLE.

Video tales from the gospel push Pocahontas off her perch

Madeleine Bunting Religious Affairs Editor

IT IS first-century Rome and Nero has launched a pogrom of Christians. At risk are the jovial, overweight baker, Ben, his beautiful wife, Helena, and the cute posse of

orphans they have taken under their wing. What follows is 13 action-packed animated videos, charting their fortunes as they pit their wits - and faith - against the evil Nero and his sycophantic henchmen. This is The Story Keepers, which took the American

home video market by storm when the first instalment stole a march on Disney's Pocahontas, beating it to the top of the charts last month. What sells the multi-million pound animation industry even more is that they have missed out on the potential of one of the oldest stories of all - the Gospel. For woven into the adventures of the first-century family are large chunks of the life of Jesus Christ as told by Ben to fellow Christians in the underground movement.

The man behind the video hit is a retired lecturer and author, the Rev. Brian Brown, who spent 10 years trudging around church leaders trying to find backers for his dream of bringing the Good News to an "unchurched generation."

Mr Brown, who was for 20 years a lecturer in religious education at Oxford Polytechnic, mortgaged his house several times over and even flew to the Vatican to pray with the Pope's adviser on television as part of his lobbying for financial backing. Finally, a coalition of Irish Christians introduced him to Christian businessmen who put up the £4 million to make the video with a Hollywood-based team of animators. Ten per cent of profits will go back to the Irish churches.

Mr Brown yesterday told representatives of British churches at the first British "Church Leaders' Day" that he was desperately worried about the biblical illiteracy of young people. This is a tool of evangelism, bringing the word of Jesus to millions outside the church.

The video is expected to sell 500,000 copies per episode in the US - another two episodes are being released in March - and the interest of major companies has now been triggered. Mr Brown is negotiating with British broadcasters and video companies over British rights as well as for a feature film in the US.

Split reaction as Eva Peron's ghost walks

Calvin Sims In Buenos Aires

PARTY AT the Patagonia restaurant in Buenos Aires were expected to be a quiet dinner when, suddenly, the wall of stuns pierced the air. In walked Madonna - but she looked like Eva Peron, dressed in a 1950s black, fitted dress with a big skirt, but hair in a chignon and her blue eyes now brown.

"The whole room gasped," said Court Hay, an American writer who was in the restaurant. "It was the ghost of Eva Peron."

Controversy about Madonna's suitability to play the former Argentine first lady has surrounded the singer since she arrived in Buenos Aires almost a fortnight ago to star in the film of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical Evita. It is no hard to see why the producer picked a pop star experienced at playing sexually charged roles for the part of Peron in a film expected to portray Argentina's legendary first lady as an opportunist who slept her way to power. But a bitter debate continues over whether she is fit to portray Peron, whom many Argentines consider a saint.

Ministers pass tax buck to councils

James Melkie and David Brindle

THE Government passed the spending buck last night to local authorities and increased the pressure on April's council tax bills. Ministers faced with another wipe-out in the May local elections prepared to blame Liberal Democrat and Labour-run councils for large rises in local taxes despite Treasury forecasts that average bills could rise by 8 per cent.

The Government even relaxed some spending cuts yesterday on the proviso that the extra money went to education and social services or to police authorities as Whitehall grant rises by 2.8 per cent and overall spending by 3.2 per cent.

But the tactic, made clear as MPs confirmed next year's local government spending settlement, provoked outrage from the Opposition, which accused ministers of effectively taking back half of the 1.5 per cent income tax cut announced in the Budget.

Local decisions were based on objective assessments. Total standard spending - the sum which the Government thinks councils need in order to provide a standard level of services - for England for 1996/97 will be £44.93 billion. The small grant will be £35.6 billion.

Mr Dobson added: "The level the Government has set for the coming year is £1 billion lower than councils are actually spending this year, before taking into account inflation." "Councils will be faced with the dilemma of cutting services or facing the wrath of the auditor and the courts."

What the hell is wrong with Catherine Bennett and her ilk? The Prince of Wales reads, prays, loves the theatre and music, tells jokes, likes a dry martini - and works his butt off to help deprived young people find a future. He detests the destruction of the environment and supports multi-culturalism - issues most Guardian readers would take extremely seriously. Does all that merit the hostility and contempt dished out by chattering hacks like Bennett?

Bel Mooney, Letters page 8

Judge warns of jail term as Customs hunt goes on for mastermind

Woman police officer guilty of £20m gold fraud

Duncan Campbell Crime Correspondent

A WOMAN police officer was yesterday convicted of involvement in a complex £20 million gold bullion smuggling fraud.

Lucie Gilmore, aged 25, of Bridgforth, Shropshire, a patrol officer based in Telford with West Mercia police, wept at Knightsbridge crown court in London when the jury returned its 10:2 verdict after six hours of deliberation.

mind the operation: his girlfriend Rekha Sahdev, both believed to be on the Indian sub-continent and Hariah Kumar, a Dubai businessman.

'This was a fraud on a very large scale by determined individuals, two of whom were supposed to be on the side of law and order' — Jim McGregor, Customs deputy chief investigation officer

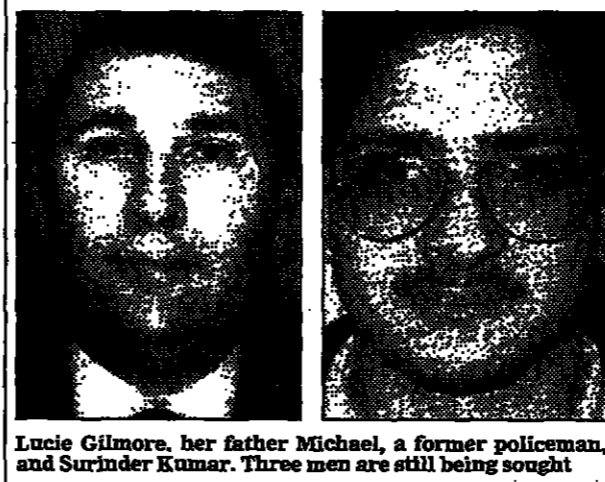
individuals, two of whom were supposed to be on the side of law and order." He added that it was "very sad" to see a young policewoman's career ruined.

about the Gilmore's smuggling trips to Belgium and Luxembourg. The information was passed to Customs. Customs were already investigating the other end of the fraud, which started in July 1991 when Kanda opened an account with a gold dealer called Stevens NV in Brussels.

smuggled back into Britain by couriers using a fleet of Audi cars in which the gold was concealed in the bodywork and under the back seat. More than 100 such trips were made. The gold could then be sold in Britain with VAT of 17% per cent added, leading to a total profit of £3,420,000.

Gilmore were arrested, Lucie at the station where she worked. No further action was taken against Davis.

Michael Gilmore, who did not give evidence for his daughter, had attempted to end their relationship while he was doing his accountancy exams.



Lucie Gilmore, her father Michael, a former policeman, and Surinder Kumar. Three men are still being sought.

'More tagging' plan to ease jails pressure

Alan Travis Home Affairs Editor

An expansion of house arrest by the use of electronic tagging for minor offenders is being considered by the Government to offset an expected sharp rise in the prison population.

the studies on fine defaulters and motoring offenders, but are also considering them for prisons on parole, house leave or temporary release. Penal reformers estimate the tougher sentences could add between 10,000 and 20,000 inmates to the current 51,000 prison population.



Sheeting covering the spot where two women were found dead PHOTOGRAPH: JAMIE WISEMAN

Woman made 999 call as killer stabbed her

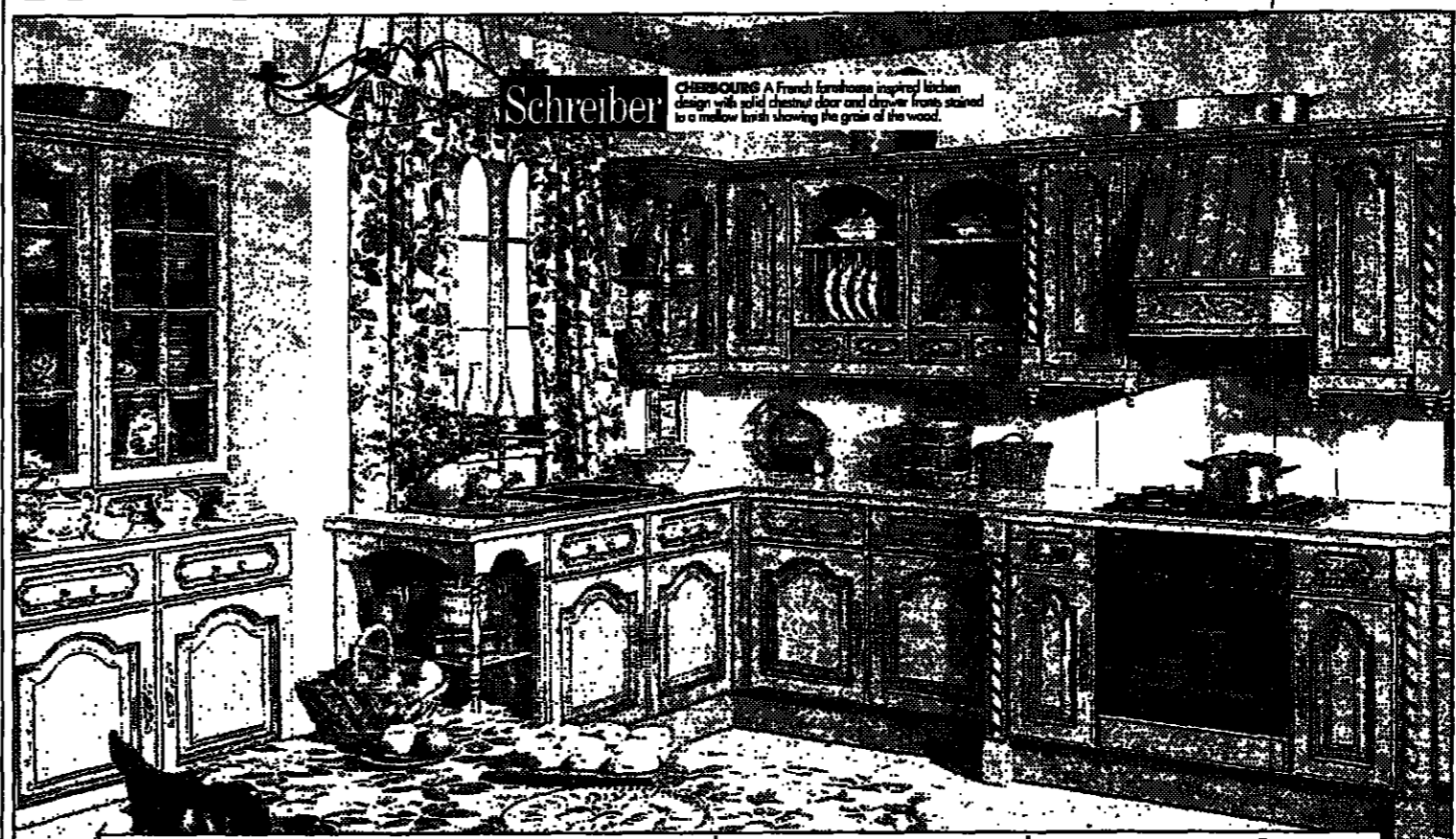
Martin Wainwright

A WOMAN made a desperate 999 call as a knife-wielding man stabbed her and her mother to death in a rural market town, police said last night.

from a bedroom to escape the attack. A post mortem yesterday by a Home Office pathologist showed both had died from stab wounds to the neck.

They confirmed that the man, who is believed to have been a regular guest at the house, was known to both women.

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Man paid £5 for 47hr week

Clause in contract deal invoked because of missed night's work

David Ward

A WAREHOUSE worker said yesterday he was paid just £5 after working a 47-hour, five-night week loading goods destined for Sainsbury supermarkets.

weeks to deliver goods to stores during the busy pre-Christmas period. He was trained for a week and then worked two five-night weeks but took a night off to attend his pub soccer team's Christmas party.

clause came to light," said Barry Navarro, a project worker with the unit. "But the amount of money surprised us. We suspect this could be common practice."

SHOPPING HOURS: Mon 10-8, Tues 10-6, Wed 10-6, Thurs 10-6, Fri 10-8, Sat 9-6, Sun 11-5, except Southampton 10-4. Northern Ireland: Mon 10-6, Tues 10-6, Wed 10-9, Thurs 10-9, Fri 10-9, Sat 9-6, Sun 12-5. PHONE FREE PAGES 0500 192 192 FOR YOUR NEAREST STORE.

MFI home works Also available at PRICE INFORMATION: Room prices are for rigid factory built cabinets as listed above and do not include appliances, accessories, light ornaments, chairs etc. All items subject to availability.

Handwritten signature or mark.

News in brief

Minister rejects Marchioness plea

THE Government last night rejected one of the key recommendations of the inquest jury on the St Marchioness disaster victims that all crew on passenger launches should be required to wear inflatable lifejackets.

Camden gets tough on staff

NEARLY half the staff working for the London borough of Camden... including some who pledged to stay at their jobs after a £10 million National Lottery win last week - face dismissal and re-employment on poorer terms.

Judge's promise to woman

A JUDGE at Durham crown court ordered a mother, aged 83, to disclose her home phone number so that the Department of Social Security can trace her address, despite her fears that her ex-husband may attack her.

Degrees of change

WOMEN graduating from British universities outnumbered men for the first time last year after 10 years of rapid growth in the number of students gaining first degrees.

Receiver called in at charity

A CHARITY which claims to raise money for aid projects in Africa has been taken into receivership following an investigation by the Charity Commission into alleged misappropriation of funds.

ITN strike called off

A STRIKE which threatened to disrupt ITN's main news programmes today was called off after an agreement was hammered out at Acas, the arbitration service.



Ideal home... the listed pigsty which English Heritage believes could become a 'des res' - at a price

Council sinks £40,000 in pigsty

Maew Kennedy Heritage Correspondent

A KENT council has reluctantly voted to spend £40,000 on restoring a listed tin shack which an official said was "a pigsty, by name and by nature".

English Heritage and Gillingham borough council are locked in dispute over the Grade II listed Black House, which has been a house, a pigsty and a chicken coop, at a time when the entire listings system is under review.

Branson snub may hinder lottery probe

Andrew Culf Media Correspondent

THE barrister investigating bribery allegations surrounding the National Lottery conceded yesterday her inquiry would be hampered by Richard Branson's decision to boycott the proceedings.

Mr Branson complained the inquiry was not genuinely independent, had a limited remit and would be held in private.

Mr Branson's meeting with Mr Snowden in September 1993. Any subsequent action would be determined by Mr Davis.

Mr Snowden has indicated he will give evidence, and Ms Rafferty said she was keen to talk to the Panorama journalists and production team involved in setting up the interview with Mr Branson.

Carling case mars press watchdog delight

Andrew Culf

LORD Wakeham, chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, yesterday hailed a momentous year in which he claimed the body had proved its independence and ability to bite.

over its decision to reject complaints from Julia Carling, estranged wife of the England rugby union captain Will Carling, that the Sun had invaded her privacy.

with the tabloid that Mrs Carling had forfeited her right to privacy because she had previously put her private life into the public domain through interviews and articles designed to promote her career as a television presenter.

public domain it was not unreasonable for newspapers to comment upon them.

not one inch of room for complacency. We are well aware that memories are short and that just a few ill-judged stories could again throw the future of self-regulation into doubt.

Advertisement for Alliance & Leicester Giro Current Account with £200, then go shopping! Includes text about £20 worth of Marks & Spencer gift vouchers and contact information.

Murdered backpacker buried

Thai judges sentence Buddhist monk to firing squad



JOHANNE Masheder, the English backpacker murdered whilst holidaying in Thailand, was buried yesterday, hours after a Buddhist monk was sentenced to death for killing her.

appeared in December, days before she was due to return home to start work as a solicitor after a three-month trip around the world.

our country. The judge sentenced Yodchart to death by shooting.

Advertisement for 'BOOK A VALENTINE £69 SPECIAL ON EUROSTAR TO PARIS OR BRUSSELS.' Includes contact number 0345 881 881 and a small image of a train.

Advertisement for a group of influential scientists wanting to pinpoint genes that influence intelligence, as measured by IQ scores, and they plan to do the work while telling as few people about it as possible. Includes 'OnLine page 2'.

World news in brief

Polish communists nominate new PM

POLAND'S reformed communists held on to power yesterday after negotiations with their junior coalition partner, the Peasant Party, brought the nomination of a new head of government, diffusing the crisis caused by the resignation of prime minister Jozef Oleksy amid allegations he spied for Russia.

The new candidate is Mr Oleksy's party colleague, the deputy speaker of parliament, Wladzimir Cimoszewicz. A respected technocrat, Mr Cimoszewicz, aged 45, supports continuing market reforms and European integration.

President Aleksander Kwasniewski was expected to accept the nomination today before leaving for the World Economic Summit in Davos. He had urged a speedy resolution to the crisis while trying to allay Western fears that the scandal would affect Polish credibility for Nato membership.

The composition of the new cabinet is not yet known, but few observers expect big policy or personnel changes. Mr Oleksy, who denies any wrongdoing, was elected party leader the day after he was forced to resign. — *Matthew Brzezinski, Warsaw.*

Saint protects missiles

SAINT BARBARA, a fourth-century martyr traditionally prayed to in the West by those in danger of sudden death, has been made the patron saint of Russia's intercontinental nuclear missile force. The command centre from which the Strategic Rocket Forces have the power to take the world apart in considerably less time than it took the God of Genesis to put it together was visited on Tuesday by the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Alexei II, who presented generals with an icon of the saint.

The patriarch said: "Her [Saint Barbara's] presence before God will give all you, dear brothers and sisters, peace, prosperity, health, strength and courage in carrying out military service for the glory of our fatherland."

The patriarch said he had chosen St Barbara because her feast day, 17 December, was on the same date as Russia's officially appointed Rocket Forces Day. Western hagiographers, however, consider the martyr to be the patron saint of people with highly dangerous jobs, including artillerymen.

The Oxford Dictionary of Saints records that her father was said to have been killed by lightning. "This was the basis of her patronage of those in danger of sudden death, first by lightning, and then by subsiding mines, or cannonballs. Hence her patronage of miners and gunners." — *James Mack, Moscow.*

China serenades Hong Kong

THE People's Liberation Army of China has just released 15 bracing songs to serenade Hong Kong into submission when Britain hands over the colony next year.

Starring members of China's post-1997 military garrison, the new recording includes I Love You Hong Kong, To the Fragrant River as a Soldier, On the Training Ground, and Put Your Heart at Ease Mother, Put Your Heart at Ease Motherland.

A cover photograph shows a soldier, sailor and airman, two of them holding Chinese Kalashnikovs, beneath a billowing red flag against the skyscrapers of Hong Kong's central business district.

The PLA's debut on Hong Kong's music scene is part of a charm offensive by the military. But the songs are in mandarin, a dialect understood by few in Hong Kong. — *Andrew Higgins, Hong Kong.*

Rights groups protest

INTERNATIONAL human rights groups have protested at the appointment of the Honduran military commander in chief, General Luis Alfonso Discua, to his country's delegation on the United Nations Security Council.

Gen Discua was the first commander of the CIA-trained Battalion 316 which has been identified by the government's commissioner for human rights as the unit involved in the torture, kidnapping and murder of dozens of leftwing opponents during the 1980s. His appointment as one of two deputies to the Honduran permanent representative to the UN was made personally by the president, Carlos Roberto Reina, after the two clashed last December over attempts to bring 10 military officers to court.

The World Organisation Against Torture in Geneva yesterday called for Gen Discua to be dismissed. Honduras's seat on the Security Council expires at the end of the year. — *David Pallister.*

Serbs fear their relatives' graves in Sarajevo may be desecrated, reports Julian Borger in Vukovo

Dead raised to rest in peace

LAZAR VUKOVIC never imagined his life would turn out like this. When he buried his mother and son in Vukovo cemetery, he did not think he would be back on his hands and knees scraping the dirt off their coffins and sweating as he raised them from their graves.

With the help of neighbours and his surviving son, Momcilo, Mr Vukovic worked slowly and methodically from dawn yesterday, straightening his back only to share a ceremonial glass of plum brandy.

Clearly a man in rigid control of his emotions, he worked quietly, confining himself to murmured remarks about the soil, the iciness of the wind, and the surprising weight of the coffins.

His mother, Stmina, was killed in 1992 when a mortar hit the family home. Two years later Mr Vukovic buried his son, Obren, in a nearby plot. Obren was aged 29, but he died of a weak heart, driven beyond its limits by the war.

About 40 Serb families have come to Vukovo cemetery to dig up the remains of relatives. They will take them with them on a trek in search of new homes when Serb districts of Sarajevo are transferred to government control on Saturday.

Efforts by international agencies to persuade them to stay have been poorly funded, and have so far proved puny against a wave of panic. Sarajevo Serbs fear Muslim reprisals

Last of Islamic mujahedin troops bow out

THE last group of Islamic mujahedin who fought on the side of the mainly-Muslim army in Bosnia's war has left the country, a Nato spokesman said yesterday.

"The remaining foreign forces left Koprivna [in north-west Bosnia] at 7.30 hours yesterday morning and were escorted to the Croatian border by civil police," Lieutenant-Colonel Mark Rayner told a briefing.

The presence of the volunteers, Muslims from different Islamic countries, alarmed the Pentagon and a clause on the removal of all "foreign forces" was included in the Dayton peace agreement.

Washington apparently feared that the mujahedin might see US peacekeeping

forces in Bosnia as a legitimate alternative target once the war against the Serbs had stopped.

The Pentagon put its 13,000 troops deployed with the Nato-led Implementation Force (I-FOR) on alert last week, saying its intelligence reports indicated "increased activity" from the mujahedin in Bosnia. — *Reuters.*

Lazar Vukovic is more matter of fact than his son: "It's just that we need to go to the graves every Sunday, and when we are on the other side of the line, we wouldn't be able to do that, and that would be very painful."

An aluminium sarcophagus lay beside each grave. The family had bought them from a local ironmonger, fearing that the old wooden coffins would be in no shape to transport.

They were proven right. Four feet down, their spades hit the wooden lid of Stmina's casket. Lazar scraped the soil away and it was clear that it had collapsed under the weight of earth. They carefully slipped cords underneath and hauled it up to the harsh winter sunlight.

One of Vukovo's grave-diggers wandered over to tell them that the coffin was so heavy because of water filtered out of the saturated clay. They would have to drain it before the wooden coffin was placed in the new metal sarcophagus.



Troubled waters... A team of Turkish commandos and a Turkish journalist return to Turkey yesterday after landing on the disputed island of Imia in a midnight operation

Aegean retreat irks Greek MPs

Helena Smith in Athens and agencies

GREECE'S Socialist government came under a bitter attack yesterday for heeding President Clinton's call to back down from a military confrontation with Turkey over a disputed rocky outcrop in the Aegean.

The government, under the new prime minister, Costas Simitis, faced calls to resign and accusations of treason when parliament met to discuss what many saw as a humiliation in the face of Turkish threats.

"The removal of Greek troops from the island and the lowering of the Greek flag constitutes an act of treason," Militiadis Evert, leader of the conservative New Democracy party, told parliament. "You

have only one thing left to do — resign."

The Greek government achieved a disengagement of Greek and Turkish forces around the island of Imia and a de-escalation of the crisis.

Mr Simitis told parliament angry shouts of "traitors" and "sell-out" from opposition MPs.

Members of New Democracy and of another nationalist party walked out in protest during a debate before a confidence vote which the Socialists are expected to win.

But a certain calm had returned to the Aegean after Mr Clinton insisted that it was unacceptable for two Nato allies to go to war over an island which is only used to graze goats. He said Greece and Turkey "have too much in common and too much to gain in getting along with

each other and we have too many other important issues in that area" for the dispute to escalate.

"We reached an agreement on gradual withdrawal of military units which started at six this morning and is under way. The biggest units have already disengaged," said Theodoros Pangalos, the foreign minister.

Turkey responded by saying it was pleased with the reports that Greece was withdrawing and confirmed it would also pull back. "We only wanted one thing, that the Greek soldiers, ships and flag would be withdrawn," said Deniz Baykal, the Turkish foreign minister.

The rapid deterioration in relations between the two countries appears to have scuppered hopes of a rapprochement on Cyprus, where the Americans are hoping for a big effort towards a settlement this year.

The dispute over Imia erupted last week after Turkish journalists went to the island, which Turkey calls Kardak, and replaced a Greek flag with a Turkish one.

Greece says the island was ceded to it by Italy in 1947 along with the main islands of the Dodecanese off the Turkish coast, but Ankara disputes this.

A Greek navy helicopter crashed during the mutual withdrawal yesterday. The Greek defence ministry said three crew were missing.

As Greek gunboats, submarines and elite commandos retreated, few believed it was the end of the spat. The dispute has reinforced the Greek perception of Turkey's desire to expand across the Aegean.

Czech party slows race to Nato

Jonathan Steele

THE first hint of a pause in central Europe's rush to join Nato has emerged in Prague, with the Social Democratic Party's promise of a referendum before any decision is taken.

To the displeasure of United States diplomats, the party has also said that if the Czech Republic joins Nato it should not permit foreign troops or nuclear weapons to be based on its territory.

The Social Democrats are running second to the ruling Civic Democratic Party in opinion polls before parliamentary elections in May. Like the rightwing government, the party used to advocate unqualified entry to Nato. But delegates at the recent party congress forced

the leadership to accept that any decision to join must be put to the nation.

The retreat from Nato-fanaticism mirrors poll findings in Hungary and Poland, where broad public support for Nato membership has declined somewhat.

In Hungary, a poll late last year found support dropping from 46 to 38 per cent and opposition rising from 11 to 30 per cent after Nato published its long-awaited conditions for enlargement. Although the alliance set no a priori requirement for new members to accept nuclear weapons and foreign troops, it did not offer them a veto.

In Poland, a poll showed 59 per cent against foreign troops and 62 per cent against nuclear weapons in Poland after entry to Nato.

The new hesitancy over the terms of Nato membership appears to be a revival of the mood which swept through central Europe a decade ago during the fierce debate about stationing Soviet SS-20 and American Pershing and Tomahawk missiles on each side of the cold-war divide. In Germany and central Europe many felt they would be the first victims of an exchange of medium-range nuclear missiles by the two superpowers.

Central Europeans are realising that Nato membership carries risks as well as gains. They also see that long-standing alliance signatories have always had a carte blanche to the Czech Republic. The Czech Social Democrats' new policy says the country should follow the Danish or Norwegian models of Nato membership, which ban foreign bases and nuclear weapons.

Analysts in Prague say US diplomats are particularly concerned by a possible ban on foreign troops and bases in central Europe. Washington views the troop-free zone in Denmark and Norway as less important because both are "flank countries".

In advance of possible Hungarian membership of Nato, the US has taken over a large former Warsaw Pact base at Kaposvar in the Danube plain. The Pentagon is using it as a staging area for troops implementing the Bosnian peace accords, but analysts presume the US wants to turn it into a permanent facility for American use.

Vaclav Klaus, the Czech prime minister, wants no limits on Nato. He said Czechs should not behave "like a passenger who takes the train but does not buy a ticket".

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ST0004/SS1813/3/XX

Without the idea of art: that's a chilling notion, but it may be that finally after 2,500 years, literature in the widest possible sense is surrendering to technology. After all, in just 50 years the study of Latin and Greek has been reduced to a tiny specialist area and it looks as if departments of English will follow.

Henry Porter G2 cover story

JAN 10 1996

There is little for Yeltsin to celebrate, with poor poll ratings and an exodus of the country's brightest

Birthday blues for Boris as his popularity sinks

David Hearst in Moscow

A RUSSIAN president's 65th birthday is usually quite an event. In the old days he could reasonably expect to award himself a golden star of Hero of Socialist Labour, which would be presented at a Kremlin ceremony broadcast on state television. Gifts would pour into the Kremlin; bright carpets and jars bearing the great leader's face from the Asian republics, model tractors, aircraft, tanks and missiles from workers' collectives. The celebrations would culminate in an assembly at the Bolshoi Theatre in the evening. Boris Yeltsin, who turns 65 today, will be spared all this. "Going by past years, we do not expect any public engagements," an official in his accreditation department said.

The president will have a regular working day and he will celebrate his birthday with his work colleagues and family. It will have to be a quiet affair if the telegrams the president is receiving are anything to go by. One such telegram read: "The people of the town of Salsk, of the Rostov region, are indignant about the cruelest violation of law and human rights linked to the start of the president's electoral campaign." Russian railway workers were apparently ordered to sign, on threat of dismissal, the official petition supporting Mr Yeltsin's candidacy. On Saturday the president owned up to the wheeze as only he knew how — by threatening to "beat" his deputy prime minister, Oleg Soskovets, who runs his campaign. Some railway workers had been told they would not

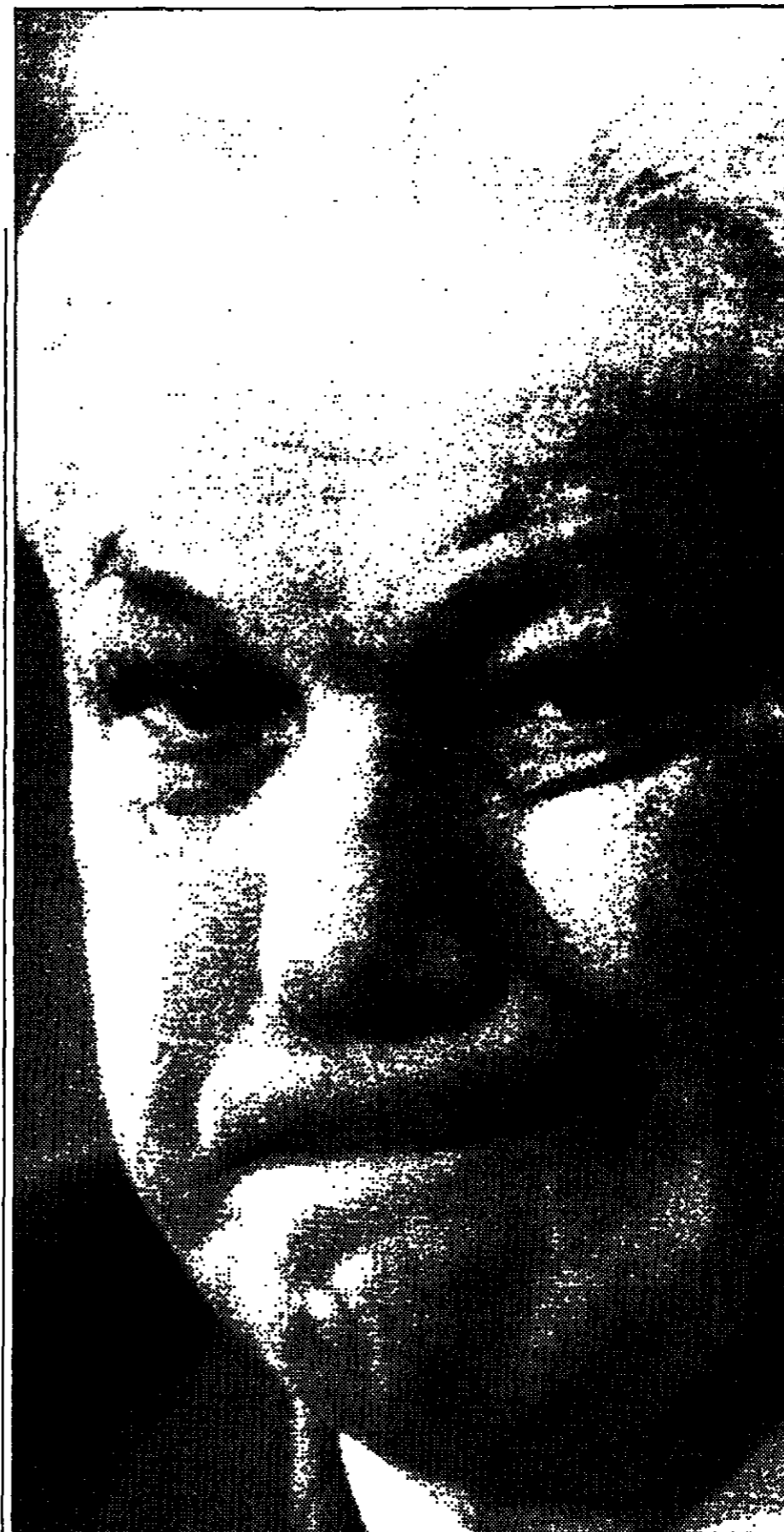
be paid unless they signed his nomination. He needs 1 million signatures. But this is mild in comparison with what many Russians think of their president. Activists from the All Russian Fund of Social Support for the First Russian President in Mr Yeltsin's home town of Yekaterinburg were disillusioned. Angelina Shor said: "Thanks to the activities of the president's circle, we found ourselves in such dirt... I am not only not going to agitate for Yeltsin, I won't vote for him anymore." Reactions to Mr Yeltsin were worse when they came from people who had been close to the president. Gavril Popov, Moscow's former mayor, who helped him to power, said: "Yeltsin can't break with two fundamental qualities of his personality — his populism and bossiness."

Pavel Voshchanov, his former press officer, said: "Not only your pocket, but your reason prompts you to say, 'For God Sake he must go.'" According to opinion polls, Mr Yeltsin has sunk to 10th position, with only 5 per cent of Russians expressing confidence in his candidacy. It is hard to find supporters. One, an academic, said: "I will vote for him, as many of the Italian Christian Democrats voted in the 1970s — holding their noses." Sergei Filatov, a former supporter, said: "The last steps of the president have upset me. Everything which happens near the president provokes concern, whether you talk about the state of his health, his security service or about the existence of a shadow centre of power." He should know. Mr Yeltsin sacked him as head of his administration two weeks ago.

Hungry wolves invade Estonia

Jon Henley in Tallinn

EXPECT the worst from the east, the Estonians say: If it's not Tsar Peter's cavalry it will be the Red Army. This winter, it is Russian wolves. Two unusually cold months have frozen Lake Peips, which forms much of Estonia's eastern border with Russia. This has allowed hungry grey wolves to cross into the Baltic state's deep forests, swelling the native population. Hunters estimate up to 800 wolves may be at large in Estonia, a country the size of the Netherlands, which might naturally support a wolf population a tenth of this size. "They are a problem this year," said Jaak Tambets, the environment ministry's senior conservation officer. "They take wild boar, elk and roe deer, and sometimes cattle and pets. We don't know exactly how many there are, but it's a lot." There have been no recorded attacks on humans, though a wolf was recently sighted six miles from the capital, Tallinn. The Estonian government has allocated funds to equip wolf hunters with walkie-talkies. Extra hunting licences have been granted. Wolf hunters enter snow-covered forest clearings carrying guns and reels of twine knotted with scraps of red hunting. Winding the twine through the trees, they drive the wolves into the trap where they stop short, apparently scared by the fluttering cloth. Last winter some 200 were shot this way; the figure could be higher this year, Mr Tambets said. Mass deportations and collectivisation during 50 years of Soviet occupation turned parts of Estonia into a wolf's paradise, by restoring the animal's natural habitat. A series of mild winters — bad for hunting — helped to boost numbers. In Estonian folklore, the wolf was both admired and feared. One of the few creatures strong enough to overpower the devil, it was too terrifying to be called by its real name and was known as the Grey Cotton Man, or Scratch Eye.



Lost for words... President Boris Yeltsin, who is expected to celebrate his 65th birthday quietly today, has alienated many of his former supporters who helped him to power

Russia's youth vote with their feet

Disillusioned rich students are leaving in droves to study and work abroad, writes Carol Williams in Moscow

"I HATE my country," said Maria Mikhailova as she Delta Air Lines flight from New York taxied toward the gate at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport. "I'm excited about seeing my family again, but I just cannot live here anymore," the economics student, aged 21, said, gazing with disgust at the dimly lit terminal. She was back for a visit after her first three months at Harvard — an educational opportunity unthinkable for Russians not that long ago, and one that had cost her hard-working parents dearly. But if Ms Mikhailova and thousands of other youths from the urban elite who are studying abroad opt to stay there, the exodus will take a heavy toll on Russia's hopes for a democratic future. Like many members of the emerging privileged class who have come of age at a time when Russia has open borders, Ms Mikhailova has had the chance to compare the hardships at home with

the abundance abroad and has decided that a life of sacrifice is not for her. "I want to live in America or England or France, but not here," she said. "I don't believe anything good will ever be created in Russia." The children of those prospering from Russia's new-found capitalism are leaving in droves to study abroad and to start careers in countries where they might be better rewarded. The threat of being drafted for duty in Chechnya, the rise in crime and violence in the cities, the corruption of their once-respected educational institutions are reasons why young people want to give up and get out. More than 2,000 visas are issued for Russian students by the United States consulates each year, and thousands of students are thought to be enrolled in private European institutions. The only deterrents for young Russians who decide to stay abroad are the legal and economic conditions in their country of choice.

Nearly every successful business person in Moscow argues that foreign study is the best investment parents can make for their children. Many wealthy parents also see it as a way of protecting their children against the rise in crime. "Many new businessmen here are in a position to send their children abroad for education," said Alexander Shevchenko, head of the Moscow office of the international student exchange programme, Youth for Understanding. A common feeling among young people is a weakening desire to return to build a better Russia. "I don't feel any obligation to this country," said Masha Zarakhovich, aged 20, who returned for the winter holidays. She is on a scholarship at Berry College in Mount Berry, Georgia. "The only patriotic feelings I have are for my parents, for the flat where I grew up, for

my friends — certainly not for the government." Dmitri Bogatyrev, who is studying civil engineering at Moscow State University, said the quality of higher education has suffered tremendously in recent years because the economic crisis has fostered bribery and cheating. "At MSU, a diploma costs \$7,000. Everyone knows this. At lesser schools, you can buy one for \$5,000," he said. Mr Bogatyrev, who went to school in New York while his father, a television correspondent, was working there, also blamed the sorry state of Russian higher education on the lack of financial support. "How can the government keep the best professors when they pay \$20 or \$25 a month?" he said. Russian education officials acknowledge the consequences of a youthful brain drain. Mikhail Myssanikov, chief of the foreign relations department of the state committee for higher education, said: "It always hurts to lose something that belongs to you, especially your young people and their idealistic values." But once we decided to become a democratic country, we had to come to terms with this. — Los Angeles Times.

'The only patriotic feelings I have are for my parents and for my friends'

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Outlook/ High street banking battle hots up

Simon Everard, chairman of A&L, is looking forward to being liberated from building society rules

A&L joins big league but customers may lose out

Pauline Springett

THE Alliance & Leicester's decision to opt for banking status may puzzle many of its existing customers. After all, it owns Girobank and, as far as the public is concerned, already carries on many banking activities.



Simon Everard, chairman of Alliance & Leicester, is looking forward to being liberated from building society rules. The decision by a steady stream of building societies to abandon their mutual status and opt for a stock market listing, plus in some cases banking status, is just one of the emerging trends.

A thousand families lose homes each week

Cliff Jones

NEARLY 1,000 families lost their homes each week last year, according to figures published yesterday by the Council of Mortgage Lenders which showed repossessions rising again.

forced by a fall in long-term arrears. The number of homeowners whose arrears are more than 10 per cent of their mortgage fell 16 per cent to 116,300 and those more than 12 months behind fell 27 per cent to 85,200.

Ford's poor sales drive down profit

Mark Tran in New York

PROFITS at Ford America's second largest car maker, fell to \$4.1 billion (£2.7 billion) last year, a 32 per cent fall from a record \$5.3 billion in 1994 when it introduced several new models.

switch to new models of cars and trucks that make up about 85 per cent of sales volume in North America. These include updated versions of the Taurus and Escort.

News in brief

Rhône-Poulenc set for £1.3bn fire sale

FRENCH chemicals group Rhône-Poulenc plans to sell off assets worth 10 billion francs (£1.3 billion) over the next two years. It aims to curb debt levels that have been augmented by its share of the acquisition cost of Elfons by its majority-owned offshoot, Rhône-Poulenc Rorer.

Airport delays cut

AVERAGE delays for UK flights have dropped from 14 minutes to four minutes since 1992, while air traffic delays in Europe have halved in that time, Transport Secretary Sir George Young announced yesterday.

Halifax insurance switch

THE Halifax Building Society has announced plans to launch a general insurance company which will sell a full range of personal and household insurance policies underwritten by Royal Insurance.

Novell sells WordPerfect

Nicholas Bannister Technology Editor

NOVELL is selling WordPerfect, one of the world's leading word processing software, for a fraction of the \$85 million (£57 million) it paid less than two years ago.

PerfectWorks, a productivity tool, and Envoy, an electronic publishing product. Novell agreed to buy WordPerfect for \$1.4 billion in March 1994 but saw the value of the deal drop to \$65 million as its share price fell before completion.

cent of the world market for graphic software packages, with some 20 million customers. It hopes to sell updated versions of WordPerfect and PerfectOffice for Windows \$6 to its existing customer base and interest WordPerfect's \$5 million users in its graphics software.

Bloomberg goes trading

Patrick Donovan City Editor

AMBITIOUS plans to set up a global share market, a director of Bloomberg yesterday with a ground-breaking deal that could allow subscribers to the Bloomberg news agency to trade through London's Tradepoint stock exchange.

development with Bloomberg opens up our market to a much wider audience with, for example, dealers in the Far East and North America being able to trade directly with the Bloomberg news agency.

The Guardian Valentine Gift



This year the Guardian offers you the chance to send your Valentine a gift book and enclose your card within the same package for only £5.99.

A form for ordering the Valentine gift, including fields for name, address, and payment details.

Underside

Pauline Springett

TO Tom Bower's Hampstead residence for the launch of Maxwell: The Final Verdict, which may become a collectors' item by the end of the week if the authorities clear the decks (and the bookshelves) for the "double jeopardy" trial of Kevin Maxwell.

Underside

Pauline Springett

JEAN Baddeley, is apparently involved in producing a directorial debut in eastern Europe where the handle retains some cachet. Meanwhile, Bob Cole continues to serve his life sentence at what was the printer, BFC.

Underside

Pauline Springett

THE efforts of estate agents desperate to revive interest in the property market become ever more bizarre. Keith Cardale Groves is marketing a "stucco-fronted Regency house in Chester Row, Belgravia, SW1".

Underside

Pauline Springett

PERFECT timing or what? City law firm Denton Hall is holding a seminar next week to discuss the future of fraud prosecution in the UK.

Advertisement for Cellphones Direct, featuring a Motorola Duo phone and promotional text.

Advertisement for Cellphones Direct, including contact information and terms of service.

Large advertisement for Motorola Duo mobile phone, highlighting a limited offer of £99 inc. VAT plus a free in-car adaptor and leather case.

Rugby League

United Leeds suffer split

Paul Fitzpatrick

LEEDS's football manager Hugh McGahan is worried about his players becoming involved in rugby all the year round after the "marriage" of the city's league and union clubs. He will seek urgent talks with the rugby union club...

Athletics

Comeback run for Gunnell

SALLY GUNNELL returns to the track this weekend to run her first British race for nearly 18 months. The Olympic 400 metres hurdles champion has entered the two-day AAA Indoor Championships in Birmingham...



Back in his stride... Magic Johnson on his successful return for Los Angeles Lakers

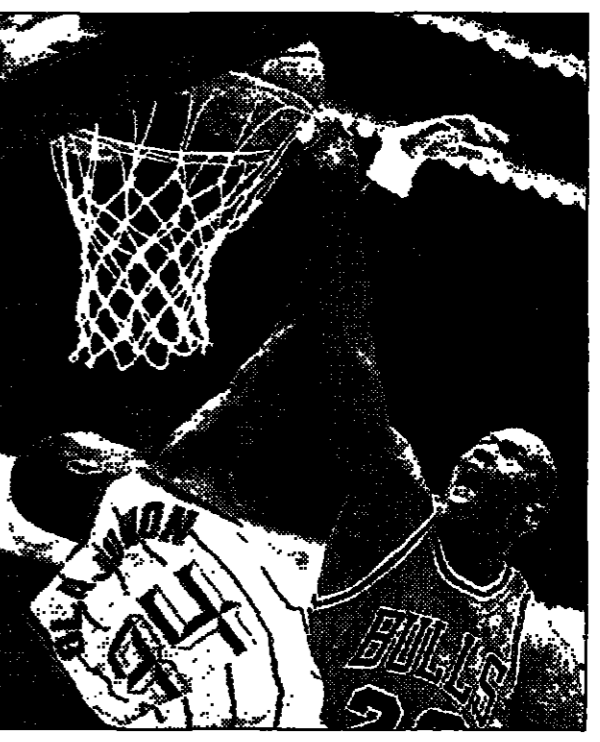
Basketball

Magic conjures up his glorious past

Ian Katz on a night of hoop dreams for supporters in Los Angeles and Houston

ANYONE flicking on an American television set for Tuesday night's NBA double-header could have been forgiven for wondering if they had been caught in a time warp...

though, were somewhat higher. When Johnson checked into the game after a little more than 20 minutes' play they made a noise which has not been heard at the Forum for many years...



Raging Bull... Jordan's slam dunk attempt is blocked

Racing

Godolphin plan spring start

Ron Cox

ALTHOUGH still in the grip of winter, Newmarket takes a tentative step towards spring with the official opening of the Warren Hill grass gallop today...

olds. An earlier start than last season is also planned, and it will be the surprise to see the Craven Meeting in April.

One three-year-old we could be hearing plenty about is Earth Shaker, who is a half-brother to Lammtarra.

than Imperial Call in Sunday's Fiennessy Gold Cup at Leopardstown.

Sedgefield runners and riders

Table listing horse racing entries for Sedgefield, including horse names, riders, and trainers.

Table listing horse racing entries for other venues, including horse names, riders, and trainers.

Lingfield (All-weather Flat) with form

Table listing horse racing entries and results for Lingfield All-weather Flat, including horse names, jockeys, and trainers.

Table listing horse racing results for various venues, including horse names, jockeys, and trainers.

Results

CHRIS HAWKINS, compiler of yesterday's Guardian selections, gave four winners at Wolverhampton, including the 13-2 nup Weetman's Welfer.

RACELINE logo and Lingfield racing information, including a phone number and website details.

Soccer

Premiership: West Ham United 3, Coventry City 2

Dowie powers in as home banker

Martin Thorpe

THE increasingly cosmopolitan West Ham United finally proved there is no place like home last night when they ended a dismal run of four straight league defeats by beating their fellow relegation strugglers Coventry.

— but the £1.5 million Dumitrescu is due to make his debut on Saturday and the £1.6 million defender Bilic is hoping to get a work permit in time to start against Spurs in a fortnight.

Their manager Harry Redknapp is unapologetic at the overseas invasion, arguing that he cannot afford the prices of comparable home talent in his urgent quest to improve on West Ham's position near the bottom of the Premiership.

Coventry, who started the game one place below West Ham in the table, fourth from bottom, are generally regarded as a side whose parts are better than the sum.

None of those were foreign parts in last night's starting line-up, despite there being six non-British players on Coventry's books. And that did not include Ogrizovic, born in Mansfield.

The goalkeeper was unable to feel at home last night as West Ham camped in the Coventry half before the break. Hughes, Dicks and Dowie all went close, the latter forcing a fine save from Ogrizovic.

However, the Hammers' closest chance came from the Coventry player Telfer, who sliced an intended clearance from Hughes's cross just wide.

Perhaps inevitably it was one of the foreigners in the

home side who broke the deadlock — Rieper. And, yes, it was grim for Ogrizovic.

Under challenge from jumping West Ham players he dropped the ball from Hughes's corner allowing the Dane to hit home. The big goalkeeper pleaded he had been fouled but to no avail.

That was just 63 seconds into the new half. Twelve minutes later Rieper hit the post with a header as West Ham searched for a second goal, which they found after another two minutes.

Bishop brilliantly put Cottee through on goal, Ogrizovic came out, missed, and the little striker, desperate being under pressure from Shaw, did well to lift the ball over the defender on the line.

Then, with their first real attack of the game, Coventry equalised three minutes later when Dublin bundled Whelan's cross over the line at the far post.

Nigel Spink last night completed a free-transfer move to West Bromwich Albion after 19 years at Aston Villa. The 37-year-old goalkeeper has signed a 2½-year contract at The Hawthorns and is set to make his debut at Ipswich on Saturday.

West Ham United: Miklosko, Brown, Rieper, Dicks, Williamson, Moor, Bishop, Hughes, Dowie, Cottee.

Coventry City: Ogrizovic, Richardson, Borrowes, Shaw, Hall, Telfer, Richardson, Williams, Salako, Dublin, Whelan. Referee: G. Poll (Ipswich).



Check, mate... West Ham's Danny Williamson and Coventry's Marcus Hall do battle for the ball at Upton Park last night. PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK BARON

Nottingham Forest 2, Leeds United 1

Roy hits the right spot

David Hopps

NOTTINGHAM Forest's first-choice striking partnership, Bryan Roy and Kevin Campbell, has been one of the least successful aspects of another impressive season, but a goal apiece accounted for Leeds United at the City Ground last night as Forest stretched their unbeaten home record past the year mark.

loose ball against the foot of Beoney's left-hand post. Beoney was at full stretch to push Woan's 30-yard around the same post minutes later after Leeds' midfield allowed him an inviting amount of time to steady himself for the shot.

Wallace's brightness gave Leeds occasional hope, and when he collected a chip from Forest stretched their unbeaten home record past the year mark.

Leeds were composed, fleetingly even fluent, but there was no doubt whose midfield possessed the greater bite. Forest, excellently led by the abrasive Gemmill, won nearly every meaningful challenge in that area and posed enjoyed a greater threat as a result.

In Leeds' inconsistent season, Speed has been more infuriating than most — a forward whose stature is of rather more consequence than his influence. His dallying on the left edge of Leeds' area after 10 minutes fell prey to Gemmill's tenacious tackle and Campbell rammed the

control allowed Beoney to save. Woan's looping header then struck the bar.

Leeds needed a moment of fortune and they found it in Palmer's equaliser in the 53rd minute. As McAllister's corner fell to his feet four yards out, he suppressed his surprise long enough to poke the ball into the net.

Delayed shock was to set in two minutes later. Palmer should have cleared Roy's left-wing cross with ease but he clumsily used a hand. Alan Wilkie gave the penalty after the intervention of a linesman. Like York's FA Cup goal for Aston Villa on Sunday, Roy's first goal for nearly three months was stroked down the middle.

As Leeds belatedly raised the tempo, Palmer's booking for a foul on Roy completed his night.

Nottingham Forest: Crossley, Lytle, Chester, Phillips, Cooper, Gemmill, Bart-Williams, Woan, Silenzi (Howe, 76min), Campbell, Roy. Leeds: Speed, Wallace, Brown (Gray, 73), Deane. Referee: A. Wilkie (Chester-le-Street).

Southampton 1, Manchester City 1

Ball rebounds with a point

Jeremy Alexander

ALAN BALL's past was caught by his present last night when Rösler rolled in a simple equaliser six minutes from time to deny Southampton the pleasure of victory through Shipperley's goal midway through the second half. Ball must have been proud of the way his lads battled — both lots of them.

him "a special welcome" but the crowd's was full of cards to seven yellows on top of a red. The game was looking like a case for the Basic Skills Agency — passes, like commas, scattered at random — when the deadlock was broken. Le Tissier, wide on the right, flung a 60-yard diagonal pass which Shipperley gathered beyond Symons and whacked inside Immel's near post from 20 yards.

It atoned for his miss just before, when Immel punched out Benall's cross and Shipperley headed on the unguarded goal. Nothing could redeem a game that was mostly about dispossession. Ball's post-match summary was succinct: "It was no classic."

Results

Table of football results including FA Carling Premiership, Endleigh League, and Scottish Cup.

Scottish League

Table of Scottish League results for First and Second Divisions.

Representative Matches

Table of representative matches including Rugby League, Tennis, Basketball, and Cricket.

Bosman rebels face huge fine

Russell Thomas

THE European Commission will today tell Uefa officials face to face that they can expect a heavy fine if they resist the landmark Bosman judgment any longer. EC officials in Brussels are threatening the European game's governing body with a seven-figure fine for failure to drop restrictions on foreign players in Uefa's three club competitions.

representatives to Geneva next Wednesday for a Uefa conference of three clubs from each of Uefa's leading 12 associations. There will be calls for a revamped European Cup and an enlarged Uefa Cup and Cup Winners' Cup. Widespread dissatisfaction with Uefa's response to the Bosman ruling and other issues has started speculation that the meeting could spark a breakthrough move for a television-driven European Super League.

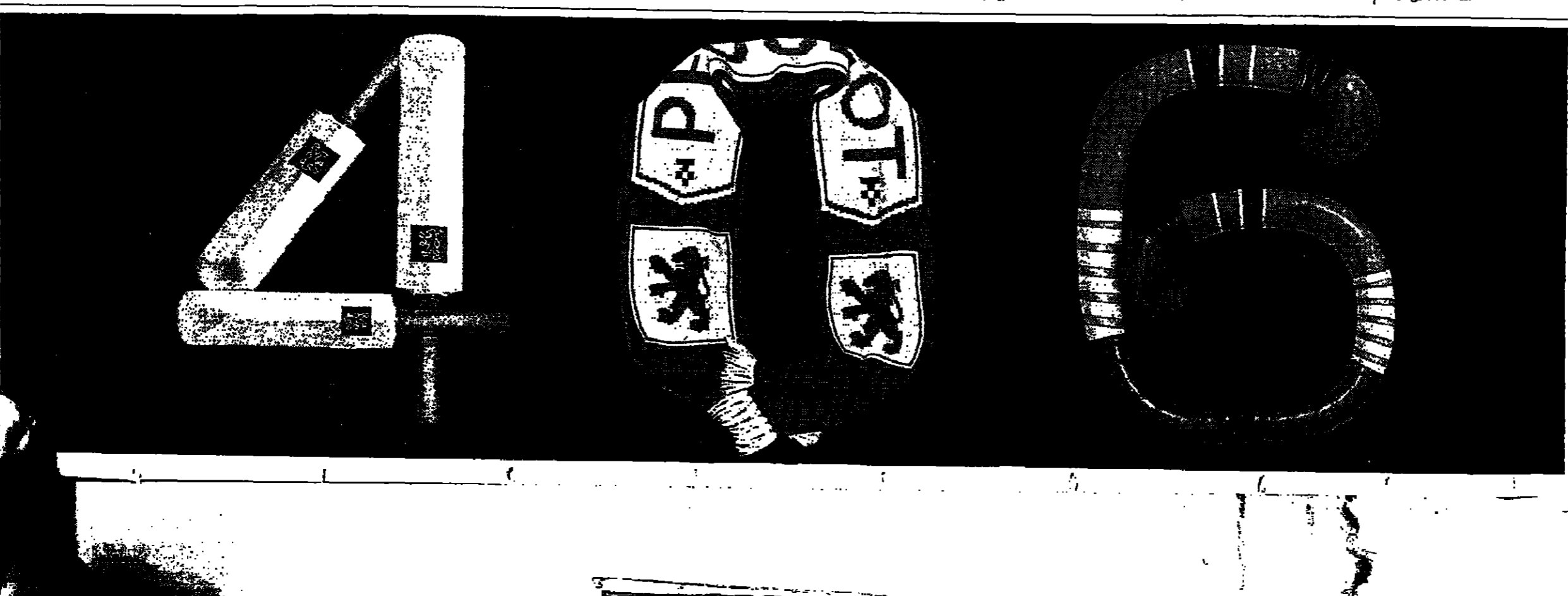
Ian Ross on Newcastle's puzzling Colombian connection

Asprilla doubts growing

CONFUSION reigned yesterday as the wheels began to fall off Faustino Asprilla's proposed \$6.7 million transfer from Parma to Newcastle.

had demanded that Parma supply all the player's medical documents after it was revealed that he had not fully recovered from a serious knee injury five years ago.

dall has launched an audacious attempt to make Real Madrid's Danish international forward Michael Laudrup his latest signing for Sheffield United.



Rugby Union IB digs in over

Robert Armstrong

T

Board tight law on scrum

Rowell: En to win thar

Blyth puts the sting

T

Rugby Union

IB digs its heels in over transfers

Robert Armstrong on the case that will test the 180-day qualification rule

THE proposed moves of the Scotland international Gary Armstrong and Doddie Weir to Newcastle Gosforth were thrown into turmoil by a new International Board regulation on player movement announced yesterday.

Board tightens law on scrums

EIGHT-MAN scrums which remain bound until the ball is out will become compulsory next season under a new law approved by the International Board at this week's annual meeting in London, writes Robert Armstrong.

Rowell: England prefer to win than to entertain

THE England manager Jack Rowell yesterday offered praise for "the refreshing-looking Welsh team" announced on Tuesday but refused to give any commitment to an expensive 15-man game of the type Wales have promised to play.

Blyth puts the sting in England A's tail

ENGLAND A, who have beaten Western Samoa and France A in recent weeks, took another scalp at Leicester yesterday with a 24-22 win over New South Wales.

that the IB had taken the best legal advice on the matter. The immediate problem of whether Armstrong and Weir will be allowed to take part in Courage League matches for Newcastle Gosforth this season after moving from their Scottish clubs will be resolved only by a flexible interpretation of IB policy by the SRU.

Armstrong's proposed move is complicated by the fact that the Jeddah scrum-half wants to continue to live in Scotland, making the 50-minute car journey to Newcastle two or three times a week. In contrast, Weir intends to leave Melbourne and settle in Newcastle, which means he will ultimately fulfil whatever residential period is stipulated.

Meanwhile, Lions tours and tours by national sides were strongly endorsed by the IB as being "essential for the development of the game on a world-wide basis".

The IB, which will shortly appoint a chief executive after the retirement of Keith Rowlands, has also agreed to move its headquarters from Bristol to Dublin, where it will enjoy tax advantages.



Lord of the flies... Townsend has talent still untapped

Townsend enjoying a roller-coaster ride

Ian Malin on the trainee banker hoping to check France's progress at Murrayfield

AT FLY-HALF there is nowhere to hide. As playmaker the No. 10 calls the shots but is also there to be shot at. And a scrum-half has to be part of his armoury.

ric acceleration, back rows have to watch him all the time, and his running skills give a back line so many options. And going to Northampton has improved his game. He has matured nicely under Ian McGeechan.

Yet Townsend, despite the ups and downs, has a keen sense of humour and is apparently without a care in the world. When you phone him at the Northampton home he shares with his fellow international Michael Dods, a Highland jig plays on the answerphone.

Sport in brief

Dope test pair allege restraint of trade

MATS WILANDER and Karel Novacek, who allegedly failed dope tests at last year's French Open, yesterday filed a writ in the High Court claiming that sections of the International Tennis Federation's rule 53, relating to appeals against positive drug tests, are a restraint of trade.

Peers fight for TV sport

A POWERFUL cross-party alliance of peers has tabled an amendment to the Broadcasting Bill to prevent satellite stations from gaining exclusive access to top sporting events.

Stern tests for Britain

BRITAIN'S men's and women's hockey teams will play against potential Olympic medalists in the FIVB Atlanta International Tournament in Milton Keynes from June 13-16.

Hutchison strikes again

PAUL HUTCHISON, Yorkshire's England Under-19 pace bowler, undermined Zimbabwe in the third and final Test in Bulawayo yesterday. He took six for 21 as Zimbabwe were dismissed for 143.

Muster hits top spot

THOMAS MUSTER of Austria will replace Andre Agassi as tennis world No. 1 when the ATP rankings are published on February 12. The American, who replaced Pete Sampras last week, is deprived of his position because the San Jose tournament is a week late this year and next week Agassi will lose the 206 points he gained for winning there in 1995.

Collins drops "spook"

STEVE COLLINS, the WBO super-middleweight champion, has dispensed with the services of the hypnotist Tony Quinn, who was given some of the credit for the Irishman's two defeats of Chris Eubank.

Snooker

Ebdon joins vanquished

PETER EBDON yesterday joined the mighty to fall at the Royal Welsh Open in Newport. Tournament favourite Stephen Hendry and John Higgins on Tuesday, he promptly went out 5-3 to the 20-year-old Welshman Mark Williams in the quarter-finals.

Boxing

Lewis staying with the Duvas

LENNOX LEWIS'S manager Frank Maloney yesterday denied that the death this week of Dan Duva, the American promoter with whom he had worked closely, had led to the cancellation of the April contest between Lewis and Riddick Bowe.

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